

Submitted to the Challenges for Change, Stakeholder Group II by Kathleen Paterson, Child Development Division, 09-28-2010

A Conversation with VP of 2-1-1 Child Care, Sherrie Suterua about CT's Statewide Child Care Referral System delivered by the CT United Way 2-1-1 Child Care ([www. 211childcare.org](http://www.211childcare.org))

The mission of the United Way CT is to help meet the needs of CT residents by providing information, education and connection to services. It furthers its mission by providing 24/7 toll-free call center access to health and human services information through a 2-1-1, as well as specialized services in child care, child development and disabilities and HUSKY health insurance; and by collaborating with local United Ways and CT State agencies and elected officials. UWC has a senior management consisting of the President & CEO, VP for 2-1-1 Health and Human Services, VP for Business Operations, Senior VP for Child Care Services and a Chief Information Officer. UWC has 240 employees and in their 2-1-1 Child Care Unit, it includes 6 referral specialists, 2 child development trainers, 6 referral specialists; 1 information-data base specialist and a supervisor. It has a budget of \$750,000 that includes both training for child care providers and child care referral.

2-1-1 Child Care is a confidential and free child care referral telephone and on-line service. In 2009, 2-1-1 Child Care received over 30,000 calls and over 74,000 visits to the 2-1-1 Child Care web site, from parents seeking advice and referrals to quality child care. It also produces reports on child care program fees and child care availability.

In 1997 child care referral services, with the approval and funding by CT's State Child Care Administrative Agency through its federal Child Development Fund, consolidated its 6 resource and referral offices to the United Way of CT's main office in Rocky Hill, CT. At that time there were concerns expressed that the centralized system would not be as connected to and knowledgeable of local recourses. The VP of Child Care Services, Sherri Suterua indicated that that did not materialize but did emphasize that training for staff was an essential component of their program. She also indicated that there were many efficiencies found to centralization. In addition to its referral service, parent and provider training and subsidy management is provided. 2-1-1 Child Care uses NACCRRAware as its information system and built a web-based interface so that parents could do on-line searches. The VP of Child Care Services, Sherri Suterua indicated that they are considering to build their own child care referral information system as they expect in the near future that NACCRRRA will no longer provide the option that the information system could be hosted locally which is what CT currently does. A trend over the past several years is a reduction in call volume and increase in on-line searches. The web-interface with NACCRRAware is designed to prompt the on-line user to call during different parts of the searching. . In June 2010 a live chat feature was added and now has ~200 callers/month via that technology.

2-1-1 Child Care was one of the first states to participate in NACCRRA's quality assurance program's certification process but did not renew this certification after their 2 year certification period. Some of the reasons for this were cost (\$~7,000), their Board did not meet the Quality Assurance Program criteria and not all staff met the qualifications criteria. They have found the standards of best practice to be very helpful in providing quality services and continue to use these standards. Child care referral surveys of service quality and finding child care as an outcome are conducted with families using the service. They are using e-surveys such as Survey Monkey and find that a majority of parents using their service prefer to communicate electronically. It is estimated that ~20% of callers are of very low income and potentially eligible for TANF. Outreach and training for parents is offered by their 2 child development trainers in partnership with local agencies and programs such as family resource centers, child care programs, child birth classes, and their Labor Boards. The primary parent training topic for parents offered is Choosing Quality Child Care.

2-1-1 Child Care works closely with their State Child Care Licensing and provide phone and fax alerts and e-files of updated licensed programs. There are an estimated 5,000 child care programs (center and home based) in CT. While there is limited e-communication with parents, there are many e-communications to providers using such techniques as e-blasts.

The VP for 2-1-1 Child Care indicated that she is not aware of other states that have a centralized statewide system but there are states that are collapsing their statewide network of resource and referral agencies. She is interested in Vermont's proposal to centralize child care referral and would be available to answer any further questions we would have.